

PORK, BEEF, AND LAMB

The self-sufficient and prolific pig is the major meat source in Mexico, and each region has its local specialty, with carnitas reigning supreme in Michoacán. A tender grilled beef steak is the featured ingredient in Mexico's original "combination plate" and also shredded in the cold meat salpicón of the Yucatán. Lamb is also a favorite meat, and here you will find a recipe for lamb long simmered in mouth-tingling chile sauce.

CARNITAS

74

PORK CHOPS MARINATED IN ADOBO SAUCE

77

CARNE ASADA

78

SALPICÓN OF BEEF

81

MEATBALLS IN CHIPOTLE SAUCE

82

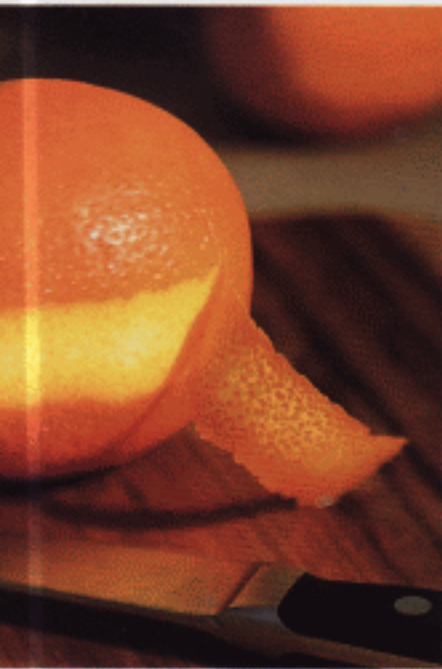
PORK TATEMADO

85

LAMB IN A SAVORY CHILE SAUCE

86

CARNITAS



ZESTING CITRUS

Most citrus fruits, except some that are grown organically, are coated with a thin layer of wax that must be scrubbed off before removing the zest, the colored portion of the peel. Although there are specialized utensils, called zesters, that can be used to take off narrow strips of this outer layer, a sharp paring knife or vegetable peeler also works well. Just be sure to remove as little of the bitter white pith beneath the zest as possible. For recipes calling for grated zest, use a Microplane grater or the finest rasps of a handheld grater. When buying oranges, don't worry if they are greenish; they will still be ripe.

Cut off any big pieces of fat from the pork and put them into a wide, heavy saucepan or frying pan. Cut the pork into strips about 1½ inches (4 cm) long and ¾ inch (2 cm) wide. Add the pork to the pan with the garlic, orange zest, orange juice, and 2 teaspoons sea salt. The meat should be in a single layer, if possible. Add water to barely cover the meat and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce the heat to medium low, cover partially, and cook, stirring occasionally, until all of the liquid has evaporated, about 1 hour. If the meat is not yet fork tender, add a bit more water and continue cooking.

Uncover the pan and continue cooking the pork until all the fat is rendered and the meat is browning in the melted fat, 10–15 minutes longer. There is usually enough melted fat in the pan, but if necessary, add the 1 tablespoon oil. When the meat is brown and crisp, using a slotted spoon, transfer it to a colander and let any excess fat drain away.

Immediately transfer the pork to a warmed serving bowl. Accompany with the warm tortillas to make tacos: slather each tortilla with the guacamole and the salsa. Serve with the refried beans and/or the rice on the side.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

3 lb (1.5 kg) boneless pork shoulder or country-style ribs

6 cloves garlic, halved

Zest of 1 orange, cut into strips (*far left*)

¾ cup (6 fl oz/180 ml) fresh orange juice

Sea salt

1 tablespoon canola or safflower oil, if needed

12 purchased corn or flour tortillas, 6–8 inches (15–20 cm) in diameter, warmed (*page 115*)

Guacamole (*page 10*) for serving

Salsa Fresca (*page 32*) for serving

Refried Beans (*page 111*) and/or Red Rice (*page 110*) for serving



PORK CHOPS MARINATED IN ADOBO SAUCE

FOR THE ADOBO SAUCE:

2 tablespoons canola or safflower oil

4 large ancho chiles, seeded (page 108) and torn into large pieces

4 cloves garlic, minced

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

1 teaspoon sugar

1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican

¼ teaspoon ground cumin, preferably freshly ground

⅓ teaspoon dried thyme

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) cider vinegar

6 pork chops, between ¾–1 inch (2–2.5 cm) thick

1 tablespoon canola or safflower oil

½ cup (2 oz/60 g) thinly sliced white onion

8 radishes, trimmed and thinly sliced

To make the adobo sauce, in a frying pan over medium heat, heat the oil. When quite hot, add several pieces of the chile and press down on them until they begin to blister, a few seconds. Transfer the pieces to a bowl and repeat with the remaining chile pieces. Add hot water to cover, weight them down with a plate, and let soak for 15 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the chiles to a blender; reserve the chile water. Add the garlic, 1 tablespoon sea salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, the sugar, oregano, cumin, thyme, vinegar, and ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) of the chile water to the blender and process until very smooth.

Spread both sides of each pork chop with the adobo sauce, cover, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or preferably overnight.

In a large frying pan over medium-high heat, heat the oil. Add the chops and sear for just 1 minute on each side. Immediately reduce the heat to medium or medium-low; the chops should continue to sizzle in the oil. Cover and cook, turning once, until the chops are firm to the touch or an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a chop away from the bone registers 145°F (63°C), 3–4 minutes on each side. Remove from the heat, cover loosely with aluminum foil, and let rest for 5 minutes. At this point the thermometer should read 150°F (65°C). Do not overcook or the meat will be dry.

Transfer the chops to warmed individual plates and top with the onion and radishes. Serve at once.

Make-Ahead Tip: The adobo sauce can be made any time in advance and refrigerated; it keeps indefinitely.

Serving Tip: Serve with small new potatoes that have been boiled until tender, brushed with a little of the adobo sauce, and quickly fried in a small amount of oil.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS



ADOBO SAUCE

In Mexico, adobo is a seasoning made from dried chiles, herbs, salt, and spices, ground together with vinegar to the consistency of a thick paste. It is similar to the Spanish mixture of same name, which calls for vinegar, olive oil, and spices. Because vinegar and salt are natural preservatives, the use of adobo was a traditional technique for pickling, and thus preserving, meats in both Spain and Mexico in the days before widespread refrigeration.



CARNE ASADA



GRILLED SPRING ONIONS

Small, fat spring onions, with bulbs about 1 inch (2.5 cm) in diameter, are usually available in farmers' markets in early summer. Fat green onions, or scallions, can be substituted. To prepare, slice off the root ends of about 4 onions per serving and trim away 1–2 inches (2.5–5 cm) of the tops. Rub the onions lightly with canola oil. Place a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil on the grill directly over high heat. Spread the onions out on the foil, with the white parts exposed over the coals. Grill, turning frequently, until browned on all sides, about 10 minutes. Toss with fresh lime juice before serving.

Place a *comal*, griddle, or cast-iron frying pan over medium heat and heat until hot. Put the garlic cloves on the hot surface and toast until blackened and soft, about 8 minutes. Remove from the heat, let cool to the touch, and peel.

In a small bowl, using a fork, smash together the garlic and the chiles and sauce. Stir in the lime juice, oregano, and 1 teaspoon sea salt.

Coat the steaks on both sides with the chile mixture. Set aside at room temperature for 30–45 minutes, turning at least once.

Build a fire, preferably using mesquite charcoal, in an outdoor charcoal grill and let burn until covered with white ash. Leave the coals heaped in the center of the grill; do not spread them out. Brush the grill rack with oil.

Place the steaks on the grill rack directly over the coals and grill, turning at least once, until crusty brown on both sides and rare or medium-rare on the inside, 5–7 minutes total. Transfer to a warmed serving platter, cover loosely with aluminum foil, and let rest briefly before serving. Serve the steaks on large individual plates and accompany with the grilled onions and lots of *salsa fresca* and guacamole. Serve the pot beans in bowls alongside.

Serving Tip: Red Rice (page 110) and flour tortillas would be part of a grilled meal such as this in the cattle country of Mexico's northern border states, along with beans, guacamole, and salsa. Often, small tamales are also offered. In Guadalajara, a city in the western part of central Mexico, the steak might also be served with quesadillas and nopales salad (page 55).

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

8 unpeeled cloves garlic

3 canned *chiles chipotles en adobo* with 1 teaspoon sauce

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) fresh lime juice, strained (about 2 limes)

2 tablespoons dried oregano, preferably Mexican

Sea salt

2 lb (1 kg) trimmed rib-eye or other steaks of choice, about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (2 cm) thick

Canola or safflower oil for brushing grill rack

Grilled Spring Onions (far left) for serving

Salsa Fresca (page 32) for serving

Guacamole (page 10) for serving

Pot Beans (page 111), made with pinto beans, for serving



SALPICÓN OF BEEF

2 lb (1 kg) beef flank steak,
cut into 2 equal pieces

1 white onion, thickly sliced,
plus ½ white onion, thinly
sliced, and ½ cup (2½ oz/
75 g) finely chopped white
onion

3 cloves garlic

6 peppercorns

2 bay leaves

1 tablespoon dried oregano,
preferably Mexican

Sea salt and freshly ground
pepper

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml)
olive oil

¼ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) fresh
lime juice

4 pickled jalapeño or serrano
chiles, finely chopped, with
2 tablespoons pickling liquid

½ cup (2 oz/60 g) cubed
Monterey jack cheese
(½-inch/12-mm cubes)

½ cup (½ oz/15 g) fresh
cilantro (fresh coriander)
leaves, chopped

Inner leaves from 1 small
head romaine (cos) lettuce,
plus 1 cup (2 oz/60 g)
shredded romaine

1 firm but ripe Hass avocado,
pitted, peeled, and sliced

Put the flank steak, thickly sliced onion, garlic, peppercorns, and bay leaves in a large pot or saucepan and add water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat so that only a few bubbles occasionally rise to the surface. Skim off any foam that forms on the surface and add the oregano and 2 teaspoons sea salt. Let simmer until a piece of the flank steak shreds easily, 30–45 minutes.

While the beef cooks, in a frying pan over medium heat, heat the olive oil. Add the thinly sliced onion and sauté until translucent, about 4 minutes. Stir in the lime juice and chiles and pickling liquid and simmer until the flavors are well mingled, about 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

When the beef is tender, remove the pan from the heat. Let the beef cool in the broth, then remove it from the broth. Measure out ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) of the broth and reserve. Save the remaining broth for another use.

Trim off any excess fat from the beef, then finely shred the beef. Put it into a bowl with the ½ cup broth and let stand until all of the liquid has been absorbed by the beef, about 5 minutes. Add the onion mixture, cheese, and cilantro. Season to taste with sea salt and pepper, and then toss together with your hands or a fork until well mixed. Let rest for 15–20 minutes to allow the flavors to blend.

Make a bed of the whole romaine leaves on a platter. Mound the beef mixture on the lettuce and garnish with the avocado slices, shredded lettuce, and finely chopped onion. Serve at room temperature.

Serving Tip: This is an ideal buffet dish. Serve with warmed corn tortillas (page 115) and guacamole (page 10).

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

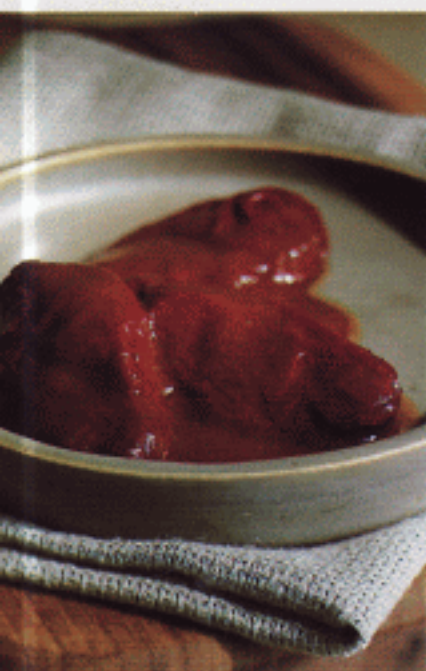


SALPICÓN

The Spanish word *salpicón* can be roughly translated as “jumble” or “hodgepodge,” but this dish of shredded beef is anything but a haphazard mixture. It is always highly seasoned with chiles and embellished with onions and avocados, and sometimes with cheese. The flavorful mixture was originally made with the meat of a small native deer once prevalent on the Yucatán peninsula, but the Spanish, who enjoyed cold meat dishes, instead served it as a main-dish salad of beef. In its contemporary form, *salpicón* is occasionally made with everything from chicken to crab.



MEATBALLS IN CHIPOTLE SAUCE



CHIPOTLE CHILES

The gutsy chipotle chile is very special, as it is one of the few chiles that is smoked after it is dried, giving it an unusual flavor and aroma. This dried ripened jalapeño chile is typically a leathery tan, with some varieties a deep burgundy, and it is used to flavor sauces, soups, and stews. The whole chiles are often stuffed. Outside of Mexico, chipotle chiles turn up most commonly as *chiles chipotles en adobo*, canned in a vinegar-tomato sauce. The chiles and their sauce are usually blended with other ingredients, such as tomatoes, before adding to various savory dishes to give them a hot, smoky flavor.

To make the sauce, in a blender, combine the tomatoes, chiles and sauce, garlic, cumin, oregano, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt. Add the beef stock and process until smooth. Taste and adjust with more sea salt, if needed, and blend again.

In a Dutch oven or *cazuela* over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon of oil until it is shimmering but not smoking. Pour in the sauce and cook, stirring occasionally, until the sauce starts to thicken, about 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, uncovered, until the sauce has reduced and is a deep red, about 5 minutes. There should be just a few bubbles bursting on the surface.

While the sauce is cooking, make the meatballs. In a bowl, place the beef, pork, cumin, garlic, 1 teaspoon sea salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper. Mix well with a fork or your hands. Stir in the bread crumbs, eggs, and milk, mixing thoroughly. In a small frying pan over medium-high heat, heat a little oil and fry a nugget of the meat mixture. Taste and adjust the seasoning of the mixture, if needed.

Form the meat mixture into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (4-cm) balls, dropping each meatball into the sauce as it is made. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and simmer, stirring occasionally to make sure that all the meatballs cook evenly (the sauce will barely cover them all), until the meatballs are cooked through, about 20 minutes. If the meatballs start to stick, add some hot water. Serve directly from the pot or transfer to a warmed serving bowl and serve at once.

Note: To make the fresh bread crumbs, use any bread a few days past its peak of freshness. Cut off the crusts, tear into bite-sized pieces, and process in a blender or food processor until coarsely ground.

Serving Tip: Accompany with boiled or steamed tiny new potatoes or White Rice (page 110).

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

FOR THE SAUCE:

4 ripe tomatoes, roasted (page 108), or 1 can (14½ oz/455 g) diced tomatoes, with juice

2 canned *chiles chipotles en adobo* with 1 teaspoon sauce

2 cloves garlic

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cumin

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican

Sea salt

1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) beef stock (page 110) or prepared low-sodium broth

Canola or safflower oil

FOR THE MEATBALLS:

$\frac{3}{4}$ lb (375 g) ground (minced) beef

$\frac{3}{4}$ lb (375 g) lean ground (minced) pork

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cumin

1 clove garlic, minced

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

1 cup (2 oz/60 g) fresh bread crumbs (see Note)

2 large eggs

1 tablespoon whole or lowfat milk, if needed



PORK TATEMADO

3 lb (1.5 kg) boneless pork shoulder

2 cups (16 fl oz/500 ml) cider vinegar

6 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

4 ancho chiles and 8 guajillo chiles, seeded (page 108)

1 teaspoon canola oil

1 medium-large ripe tomato, cut into eighths

2 large tomatillos, husked and rinsed (page 17), then quartered

2-inch (5-cm) piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped

½-inch (12-mm) piece true cinnamon bark or ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon coriander seeds

Large pinch of dried thyme

4 whole cloves

1 lb (500 g) pork neck bones, ordered in advance from the butcher

3 bay leaves

Marinated Red Onions (page 115), finely shredded cabbage, thinly sliced radishes, and warmed corn tortillas (page 115) or White Rice (page 110) for serving

Using a sharp knife, poke holes in all sides of the pork shoulder and put into a deep bowl. Pour the vinegar into a blender, add the garlic, and process until smooth. Add 2 teaspoons sea salt and ½ teaspoon pepper, process, then pour over the meat. Turn the meat to saturate it, then cover and let marinate at room temperature for 2 hours.

Put the chiles in a bowl, add hot water to cover, weight them down with a plate, and let soak for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, in a frying pan over medium heat, heat the oil. Add the tomato and tomatillos and cook until soft and browned, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool.

Preheat the oven to 300°F (150°C). Remove the meat from the marinade, reserving the marinade. Measure out ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) of the marinade and place in a blender; reserve the rest. Add a third of the chiles to the blender and process until smooth. Press the mixture through a medium-mesh sieve over a large Dutch oven, discarding the solids. Repeat twice until all of the chiles are puréed and strained, adding marinade as needed for a smooth mixture. Season with sea salt. Put the ginger, cinnamon, coriander seeds, thyme, and cloves along with the cooked tomato and tomatillos into the blender. Add 1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) water and process until smooth. Season with sea salt, then stir into the chile mixture.

Place the meat in the Dutch oven and turn it to coat thoroughly with the chile mixture. Add the neck bones and bay leaves, cover, and place in the oven. Braise, occasionally turning the meat and checking to make sure there is still plenty of sauce in the pot (add water if necessary), until the meat is tender but not falling apart, about 2 hours. Remove from the oven. Transfer the meat to a cutting board, slice thickly, and arrange on a large platter. Pour the sauce over the slices and sprinkle with the onions, cabbage, and radishes. Serve at once, with warmed tortillas or white rice.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS



CINNAMON

In the early 1500s, the Spanish introduced to Mexico a variety of spices from the Far East—including cinnamon—which were soon used by local cooks in dozens of dishes, including *tatemado*. The name of this ancient festival dish means “something to put in fire.” (It originally was cooked in a buried pot, but is now often cooked in a pot over a fire with coals on top.) The cinnamon used in *tatemado* is the delicately flavored true cinnamon bark native to Sri Lanka, not the stronger-tasting cassia bark from Indonesia, China, and Myanmar, which should be used in smaller amounts.



LAMB IN A SAVORY CHILE SAUCE



TEQUILA

Tequila is distilled from the juice of the blue agave, a plant with a pineapple-like base and long, sword-shaped branches. While tequila is best known around the world as the base for margaritas, Mexicans usually consume the spirit straight, with perhaps a bit of salt and a squeeze of lime. Always look for tequilas made from 100 percent blue agave, without additives.

The most popular types are *blanco* (unaged), *reposado* (aged 2 to 12 months), and *añejo* (aged in oak barrels for over a year). The last has a mellow flavor, much like a good brandy, that complements the chipotle sauce in this recipe.

To make the sauce, in a blender, process the chopped onion, chiles and sauce, olive oil, tomato sauce, oregano, 2 teaspoons sea salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper until smooth.

Preheat the oven to 250°F (120°C). In a Dutch oven over medium-low heat, heat the olive oil. Stir in the sliced onions and sprinkle with sea salt and pepper. Cover and cook, stirring from time to time, until softened and light yellow, about 5 minutes. Add 1 cup (8 fl oz/ 250 ml) water and the tequila to the onions, then place the lamb on top. Spoon the sauce evenly over the lamb, cover, and place in the oven.

Bake the lamb, turning it every hour or so, until meltingly tender, 4–5 hours. The liquid should never bubble; if it does, reduce the oven temperature slightly. If the liquid is cooking away, pour ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) water around the lamb.

Transfer the lamb to a cutting board and snip the strings. Cut into thick chunks and put on a warmed platter. Skim off any excess fat from the sauce and discard. Pour the sauce, along with the onions, over the lamb and garnish with the cilantro, if using. Serve at once with warm tortillas.

Serving Tips: Watercress Salad with Orange, Jicama, and Avocado (page 52) offers a nice contrast to this dish. Red Rice (page 110) could also be served alongside.

MAKES 6–8 SERVINGS

FOR THE SAUCE:

1 white onion, coarsely chopped

6 *chiles chipotles en adobo* with 2 teaspoons sauce

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) olive oil

2 cups (16 fl oz/500 ml) tomato sauce

1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 large white onions, sliced

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) tequila *añejo*

6 lb (3 kg) lamb shoulder, trimmed of excess fat, rolled, and tied

3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro (fresh coriander) (optional)

Corn tortillas, warmed (page 115), for serving

